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The Primary Source

Newsletter of the Society of Mississippi Archivists

Volume I

December, 1979

Number 4

WILLIAM WINTER ANNOUNCES ARCHIVAL PROGRAM

(Ed. Note: Governor-elect Winter has provided The Primary Source with the following statement concerning his views on the archival profession in Mississippi.)

Though Mississippi boasts of the second oldest state archives in the country, the role and position of the archivist in government and in academic circles is little known in the state. It is to the archivist that the care and custody of the records of our government and society are entrusted, and, through my own association with the profession, I am glad to have this opportunity to publicly commend these protectors of our heritage.

Because much of the archival work in Mississippi has, in the past, been conducted quietly in the background, the public seems unaware of the many problems that archivists in Mississippi encounter in their preservation work. From my own observations, I have identified some of these problems as significant handicaps to archival work in Mississippi.

1. Lack of understanding about the job of an archivist. All too often, people have no idea at all of the responsibilities placed upon an archivist. This lack of knowledge presents a barrier to gaining support for needed programs and projects.
2. Lack of professionally prepared persons for archival work. There is no on-going program in Mississippi for the training of an archivist. Out of necessity, archival positions must often be filled with inexperienced people, necessitating time-consuming on-the-job training or attendance at costly out-of-state archival institutes. Few persons have the opportunity for archival education, and professional development suffers as a consequence.
3. Lack of financial support. Financial support has been modest for archival enterprises in recent years. Not only have archivists not been honored with a professional-level salary base, too many times they have been denied the financial resources for performing their work in a professional manner. Insufficient personnel, inadequate and outdated equipment and decreasing storage space are three major aspects of this problem.
4. Lack of a records management law. For those archivists charged with the care of official state records - and, indeed, for the general public - the absence of any well-defined program for the orderly disposition of state records is a very serious problem. Under present legislation, there is no procedure whereby the preservation of any state record is assured.

As Governor, I will keep these problems in mind, and work with you to seek solutions. Expanded participation in the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and administrative support of archivists and their work should help publicize archival endeavors. Through cooperation with the Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and other archivally oriented groups, in-state archival training programs can be initiated, providing a quality program accessible to many. The legislature should be encouraged to look closely at the commitment the state has made to the care and preservation of its records and to allocate money sufficient to support quality archival services,

(continued on p. 3)

The Primary Source is a quarterly publication of news and ideas produced by the Society of Mississippi Archivists, a non-profit organization of professional archivists and interested persons. Subscription to The Primary Source is included in the Society membership dues. Membership information is printed on the last page of each newsletter.

Your contributions are welcome.
Write The Primary Source, P. O.
Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205.

h t holmes.....Editor

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Committee assignments for this year appear in this issue of The Primary Source. Members welcome any suggestion that you might offer pertaining to the work of their particular committees. Your suggestions are necessary to assist the Society in fulfilling the needs of its membership.

In early 1980, the Program Committee will begin to plan the Society's annual meeting. Several members of the Society have expressed their desire for a two-day meeting with emphasis on the practical aspects of archival work. Information concerning the location, time and activities of the annual meeting will appear in future editions of The Primary Source and through correspondence with Society members.

The number of membership renewals to date is encouraging, but well below last year's total. If you have not renewed your membership for this year, please do so today. Your membership dues are vital to the existence of the Society.

The president wishes to thank the officers, Executive Council and committee members for their splendid cooperation, and he extends best wishes to all members of the Society for a happy holiday season.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Society is two months into its second membership year, and thus far have forty-eight new members and 131 renewals, for a total of 179 as of November 30. If you wish to renew your membership in the Society for 1979-1980, but have neglected to do so, please send your dues to our treasurer, Miss Anne S. Wells, at P.O. Box 5408, Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762.

In an effort to gain additional members for the Society, approximately 1640 brochures were mailed out on October 29. Receiving the literature were historical societies and organizations in Mississippi (for distribution to their membership); members of the Mississippi Library Association; out-of-state members of the Mississippi Historical Society; public library headquarters (for distribution to their branches); and the libraries at universities, colleges and junior colleges in the state. On November 20, I sent out a reminder to all former members who had not renewed their membership.

J. G. Shoalmire, formerly the curator of the John C. Stennis Collection at Mississippi State University, has accepted a position out-of-state and has therefore resigned his position as a member of the Executive Council. In accordance with the constitution & by-laws, the council will name a replacement to fill Jim's unexpired term at its January meeting. We wish Jim well in his new endeavors.

Paul Anderson, Program Committee Chairman, and his wife, Louisa Bowen, will be moving to St. Louis in January where Paul has accepted the archivist job at Washington University School of Medicine. Paul and Louisa will be sorely missed. Our very best wishes go with them.

On November 16, I filed Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax, with the Internal Revenue Service. Since the Society did not receive more than \$10,000 during our 1979 fiscal year (October 1, 1978 - September 30, 1979) we were only required to complete the heading on page one of the form. Our advance ruling period ends September 30,

(continued on p. 8)

TREASURER'S REPORT

The last treasurer's report of the Society was presented to the membership at the annual meeting on April 10, 1979. The figures used at that time were for the period ending April 6. This report picks up with that balance.

Balance Brought Forward	\$ 1546.19
Receipts (April 6 - November 30)	1016.00
Disbursements (April 6 - November 30) (includes \$500 transfer to savings acct.)	1140.11
BALANCE (in checking account)	1422.08
Savings Account Balance	512.17
TOTAL ASSETS as of 11/30/79	\$ 1934.25

Archival Program, cont.

including increased archival personnel, adequate equipment and facilities and enactment of a strong records management law to provide for the care of all of the records of the state. At the local level, leadership needs to be provided and public support gathered for the proper care and maintenance of municipal and county records. For private archivally-oriented groups, increased participation in grantsmanship should be urged.

Mississippi was a pioneer in the American archival movement. In the seventy-seven years since that pioneering effort was begun, other states and people have made significant advances in archival work. As Governor, I pledge my support to see that Mississippi once again takes its place with the leaders of archival endeavor.



Let Your Eminence give orders throughout each and every province that a public building be allocated, in which building the magistrate (defensor) is to store the records, choosing someone to have custody over them so that they may remain uncorrupted and may be found quickly by those requiring them, and let there be among them an archives, and let that which has been neglected in the cities be corrected.

--- Emperor Justinian*

*By way of Schellenberg, et al.

SCHOLAR'S PLEA

From Pat Galloway, Translator of the Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion, comes the following:

I am searching for any trace of letters sent from the following places and people:

Natchez post (Rosalie)

Marchand; Coustilha; d'Orgon; Gourdon
Chickasawhay (Chickachae)

Baudouin

Mobile

Diron d'Artaguet; de Beauchamp;
de Louboey; Develle

Tombeche

de Bertet; de Bonnile; le Sueur;
d'Erneville; Develle; Azur; de la
Houssaye; de Grandpre; de Villemont

From Anywhere

Huche, Antoine; Alain or Allain;
Canelle; de Verbois; de Chambly;
des Islets; Champagne; Roussere;
Renochon; Dupumeux; Duverger (not
Deverges or Duverges, the engineer)

If any of these names linked with these places look familiar, or you think you might have a line on them, please let me know.

Patricia Galloway

Miss. Dept. of Archives & History
P. O. Box 571
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

PS - Spellings won't necessarily be exact; time period 1730 - 1763.

PRESIDENT CRANFORD NAMES COMMITTEES

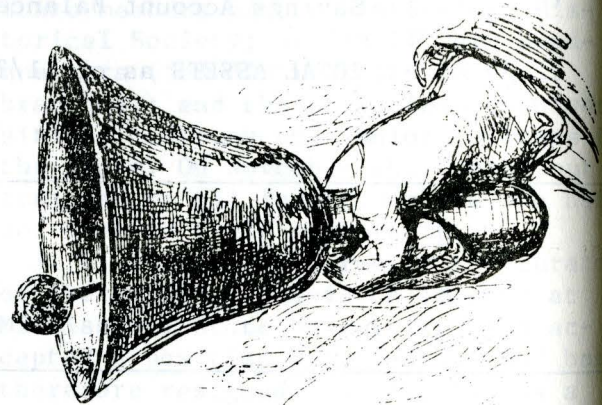
Program Committee: Paul Anderson,
USM, Chairman; Thomas Verich, UM;
Charlotte Capers, MDAH.

Nominating Committee: Claude Fike,
USM, Chairman; Curt Lamar, DSU;
William Hanna, MDAH.

Membership Committee: Betty Wood
Thomas, Lowndes County DAH, Chair-
man; Rush Miller, DSU.

PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITY

ARCHIVIST, McCain Library, University of Southern Mississippi. Two-year, NHPRC-funded position to process, arrange and describe records of the Association of American Railroads and the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad Co. Salary \$14,000. Qualifications: MLS, archival management training and preferred experience with larger collections. Position begins March 1, 1980. Send resume, transcripts, and 3 letters of recommendation to Claude E. Fike, Director, McCain Library, University of Southern Mississippi, Box 5148, Southern Station, Hattiesburg, Ms 39401. Ph. (601) 226-4171. Deadline January 15, 1980. An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.



EVENTS

Rochester Institute of Technology is sponsoring a program entitled "Preservation and Restoration of Photographic Images," March 3-5, 1980, at RIT. The cost of the program is \$195. For registration information and an application write Andrew V. Johnson, Seminar Coordinator, College of Graphic Arts and Photography, Rochester Institute of Technology, One Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY, 14623.

SAA will sponsor a Basic Archival Workshop, to be held at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, March 24-26, 1980. For details, write Society of American Archivists, 330 S. Wells St; Suite 810; Chicago, IL 60606

FROM THE HISTORICAL RECORDS COORDINATOR
-Elbert R. Hilliard

NEWS NOTES

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission is currently funding three projects in Mississippi. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History is in the middle of a project that is surveying the records of approximately seventy-five selected executive agencies. NHPRC support for this project is \$30,932. The University of Mississippi was awarded a grant of \$11,210 to begin November 1, for the purpose of processing comprehensively, arranging and inventorying over 350 cubic feet of records relating to lumber history and economics in Mississippi. The University of Southern Mississippi recently received notification of NHPRC funding in the amount of \$56,787 to salvage, process and make available the records of the Association of American Railroads and the records of the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad now being housed in a former gymnasium on the USM campus. These three grants represent a total of \$98,929 of NHPRC support for archival work in Mississippi.

Congressman David Bowen of Mississippi has been appointed to NHPRC by House Speaker O'Neill. We congratulate Mr. Bowen on his appointment and look forward to working with him.

Information and application forms for NHPRC grants can be obtained by writing either my office:

Elbert R. Hilliard
State Historical Records
Coordinator
P. O. Box 571
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

or:

Records Program
NHPRC
National Archives
Washington, D.C. 20408

The Bureau of the Census has notified the National Archives that it has converted to a more modern computer tape the data from the 1960 census of population and housing. Four years ago, the bureau realized that the 1960 records were on magnetic tape capable of being used only on equipment that has become obsolete. To prevent the loss of this important data, the bureau staff worked closely with Archives personnel to make the information readable on newer machines.

(From PROLOGUE)

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

J. G. Shoalmire has resigned as Head of Special Collections and Curator of the John C. Stennis Collection. He has accepted a position with private industry.

Anne Wells attended the Society of American Archivists meeting in Chicago, Sept. 25-28.

New Accessions:

British Communist Party Collection. 1 linear foot. The collection consists of pamphlets and microfilm, donated by Dr. Thomas Hand. The main period is the 1950s.

Thompson Pound Collection. 27 linear feet. Included are correspondence, reports, feasibility studies, and board minutes, 1962-1974. The primary focus of the collection is the Tombigbee River Management District. Gift of Mr. Pound.

Princeton's library has installed a new, more effective system for keeping track of its books: 3-inch-by5-inch file cards. They replace a computerized system installed two years ago. James Cogswell, circulation librarian, says the computer broke down too much, losing valuable records.

(From the NEW YORK TIMES)

News Notes, cont.

SOCIETY OF ALABAMA ARCHIVISTS

The Society of Alabama Archivists has submitted a grant to NHPRC to compile, produce and distribute a guide to archival and manuscript repositories in the state of Alabama. The goal of the project is to compile the data on archival and manuscript holdings in repositories themselves, to produce a guide to archives and manuscripts in the state, and to distribute the guide both within and outside Alabama.

The annual meeting of the Society will be held December 6 at the University of Alabama. Focus for both the morning and afternoon sessions will be the archival care of photographs.

(From ACCESS)

You attention is called to an article on security and libraries, "Libraries Are Striving to Thwart Wily Thieves," in the November, 1979, issue of the Smithsonian magazine.

TOUGALOO COLLEGE

The Lillian Pierce Benbow Room of Special Collections, Coleman Library, was dedicated October 14, 1979.

New Accessions:

Edwin King Collection. 26 linear feet. Relevant press clippings, personal papers of civil rights leaders and activities, including those of Edwin and Jeanetta King, and numerous internal documents of various civil rights groups. The focus is on work in Mississippi with the major topics covering the Tougaloo College Student Movement activities to promote desegregation of public accommodations, efforts at consciousness raising in the black community; efforts to reach white moderates; general life and movement activities in the state; particular campaigns such as the sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, the 1963 Jackson Move-

ment and life and death of Medgar Evers, the campaign to desegregate the University of Mississippi and public schools, and the drive to secure the vote for black citizens.

MISSISSIPPI DEPT. OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY

Madel Morgan attended the White House Conference on Library Information Services, Washington, D.C., November 15-17, 1979, as an official observer.

Staff members assisted in making tape recordings of the sessions of "Freedom Summer Revisited," a civil rights symposium co-sponsored by Tougaloo and Millsaps colleges.

Staff archivists assisted the Jackson County chancery clerk's office in clean-up operations after Hurricane Frederic in September.

Official records of note acquired recently include: microfilm of the minutes of the Mississippi State Hospital, East Mississippi State Hospital, Ellisville State School, and Board of Trustees of Mental Institutions (1912-1974); minutes of the State Building Commission (1938-1959); miscellaneous records of the Senate and House of Representatives (1959-1969); minutes of the Board of Oyster Commissioners/Seafood Commission (1902-1960).

Private manuscripts acquired include the E. A. Knight Collection, the William E. McBride Collection, the Jackson Family Collection, the Frank E. Williams Collection, the Mitchell Robinson Collection, and the Emma Foster Nelson Genealogical Collection.



AN EDITORIAL

Mississippi has its share of natural disasters every year, and we suppose this year has not been truly exceptional in that regard. The spring floods were greater; we did have a hurricane and a lightening fire or two. Perhaps the reason this year has seemed worse for archivists is that so many records and papers have been damaged or destroyed in these occurrences. For those of us who were lucky enough to have escaped Nature's malevolent mood, we know that we may not be so lucky next year. And for those of us who were calamity-struck, we are thankful that the situations were no worse. One fact has been made clear to all of us: We are all, even now, woefully inadequate in our ability to deal with records protection and salvage when disaster strikes.

The painful experiences of recent memory have taught us well that it is too late to begin salvage work when disaster hits. Sadly, records preservation is a low priority in Mississippi salvage work, and unless arrangements and plans have been made well in advance, materials and assistance just aren't there. As an association of people concerned with the care of the records of our lives, the Society of Mississippi Archivists should sound the clarion call for the development of disaster plans and procedures for records salvage in Mississippi. Through the creation and publication of such plans and procedures, we as a society can make a valuable and valid contribution to good records keeping.

The Editor Notes -

The archivists have a governor! After all the troubles with our incumbent and NHPRC, etc., Governor-elect Winter's program, announced in this issue, should be heartwarming to all of our members. Mr. Winter has served on the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History for 22 years, ten of those as president, and is a recognized scholar of Mississippi history. He is certainly in a position to understand our work, and, for this evidence of his support, we are thankful.

I can't say that this issue is larger than most, but it is the largest of the four we've printed. By this, the second time around for me, I'm feeling more comfortable in my editorial role, perhaps too comfortable for those that helped me do the writing, proofing and printing for this issue. This means a special thanks to Kathleen McClain, a co-worker, who truly went beyond the proverbial duty call in assisting with the typing.

My feeling more comfortable has something to do, no doubt, with the lack of a single critical letter about my first attempt. That there were no letters at all, I do find a bit ruffling, but I do know that somebody read the last issue.

If you recall, Bill Hanna had reported on salvage operations after the Easter flood in Jackson. The folks up in Chicago at SAA headquarters spotted it and reprinted it in the last issue of the SAA Newsletter.

We start a new column in this issue, one on the intricacies of genealogical records. It is intended to benefit both archivists (especially those in reference) and researchers alike. Jo Cille Hafter of Greenville will be editing the column (on page 9), and any correspondence for her can be sent in care of this newsletter. (But please no personal family inquiries.)

Yazoo Citians (or is it Yazooans) are at it again. This time they are supporting investigation into their folklore heritage, with a little help from the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities. Barbara Allen is spending several months there collecting and interpreting all sorts of information, and she reports on her work, beginning on page 11.

The elections are over, and the changing of the guard (Old Guard, in some instances) is about to begin. Once again, offices will be cleared by those retiring or retired, and the new will move in.

(continued on p. 10)

REFERENCE REQUESTS?!

Anyone who has ever worked with reference and attempted to serve all patrons with friendliness and grace, has surely felt himself an inmate of Bedlam on occasion. A saner perspective is sometimes restored by laughter resulting from particularly funny, mis-stated questions. Caught up in the zeal of his particular pursuit of knowledge, the patron sometimes forgets that the archivist is not privy to his thoughts. Some of the results of such absent-mindedness have been shared by Society members:

"He was hurt in the Civil War as he had a silver plate in his head."

"The military record you sent copies of were an A., or P. A., W---, who was killed in battle in 1862. This evidently is not my great-grandfather who fathered ten children after the Civil War."

"His horse was so thin he named and called him 'Boney-Parts.' He was quoted as saying, 'Not the French kind.'"

"I am trying to trace my family lineage (me and 25,000 other people, huh?)."

"I desperately need - in the utmost hurry - all the War (Civil, of course, since that was the war) records of ____."

"What is the current address of the WPA?"

"My ancestors came from England to Virgingie in 1300."

"Wherever he went, my great-grandfather found his daughter, and married her about 1870."

"You're a genacologist, aren't you?"

"Dear historian:"

"P.S. I have 11 little Muscovy ducks. They don't quack."

SOCIETY OF MISSISSIPPI ARCHIVISTS OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Sammy Cranford.....President

Jo Cille Hafter.....Vice-President

Anne Wells.....Treasurer

Robert Bailey.....Director

Bernice Bell.....Director

Julia Guice.....Director

J. G. Shoalmire.....Director
(Resigned October, 1979)

Ronald Tomlin....Executive-Director

Society of Mississippi Archivists
P. O. Box 571
Jackson, Mississippi
39205

Archives makes it last!

Executive Director, cont.

1980, at which time we shall be required to submit information showing the Society has met the requirements of the applicable support test during the advance ruling period, i.e., that we have been a publicly supported organization. At that time, the IRS can make a final determination on our foundation status.

If you have any questions concerning the program or activities of the Society, feel free to contact me at P. O. Box 571, Jackson, Mississippi 39205.

GENEALOGICAL RECORDS -

Jo Cille Hafter

Genealogical Editor

(Ed. Note: Possibly the largest single group of people to use archival sources in Mississippi is that of genealogists. To broaden the archivists' knowledge of Mississippi archival resources for genealogical research, The Primary Source begins with this issue a regular column on genealogical records. Jo Cille Hafter of Greenville will serve as the column editor, and she has written a two-part overview of materials available for genealogical research in Mississippi. Part two will appear in the next issue.)

Genealogical research in Mississippi, like genealogical research in any other area, depends on the family you are researching, the geographical locations involved, and the quality of record keeping in those areas. However, there are some general guidelines that might assist a researcher doing work in Mississippi.

Foremost, a genealogical researcher must remember that official records were created for an official purpose, i.e., a population census, a tax roll, a conveyance of property, etc. If such "official" records contain genealogical information, it is generally a secondary matter. Records custodians are not responsible for the information contained in such records. Circuit and chancery clerks are officers of their respective courts. They are responsible for the order of court records, not the collecting of family trees from obscure records for researchers.

Mississippi became a territory of the United States on April 7, 1798. Prior to that time, any records would be found in the seat of government of the occupying country. Depending on the period of time and on the geographical area, records might be found in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Mobile or Pensacola. They might be French, Spanish or English.

In doing research during the Territorial Period (1798-1817), it is of great importance to determine the exact location of your ancestral family. The Mississippi Territory included what was

to become the state of Alabama in 1819, and from time to time Mississippi ancestors in fact lived in the portion of the territory that became Alabama. Certain Alabama and Mississippi counties have the same name, so make sure you are doing your research in the right state.

The first census of Mississippi was the 1792 Spanish Census, which mainly includes those people living in the Natchez District. The 1800, 1805 and 1810 censuses are of the entire territory. In 1805 the census was taken in an attempt at statehood. The 1816 census was taken again for statehood - Mississippi being admitted to the Union on December 19, 1817, the twentieth state. We then continue with the federal census from 1820 to the present time. Indices are available for various censuses, depending on the year and the county. A partial index of the 1880 census is available, listing those households with children under 10 years of age. The 1890 census burned in Washington in 1921 and is therefore not available. There is a seventy-five year statute of limitations on the releasing of census information for general research. The 1900 census has recently been released by the Bureau of the Census and is available in some libraries.

With statehood, Mississippi's official records became more uniform and orderly. Of great importance to genealogical researchers are the land records. The office of the Land Commissioner in Jackson holds early land records for the southern and southwestern part of the state. The county custodians for land records is the chancery clerk. Assuming that no courthouse fire happened in the county in which you are interested, it is possible to use the land records to great advantage in proving genealogical connections. For federal land and Indian lands, the Office of Land Management in Washington and the National Archives in Washington are the best sources. Various guides are available upon request concerning the records on file in these two departments.

The circuit clerk's office in each county is the custodian for marriage records. Marriage records are found in the county seat of the county in which

Gen. Records, cont.

the marriage took place. They are generally arranged chronologically by book and alphabetically within the index of the book. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) has a microfilm copy of the index cards compiled by the State Board of Health in 1926 of all marriages (black and white) in Mississippi containing the names of the bride and groom, date of marriage, county, book and page number of the original marriage record. These are filed according to the groom's last name. Additional marriages have been added to the MDAH collection with the addition of the Mormon church's microfilm of county records. You will have to check with the circuit clerk of the county to determine if a reverse index is available which will list the marriages by the bride's name.

Prior to 1859, divorce proceedings were introduced as private bills in the legislature. References to these are found in the Index to the Session Acts. Since 1859, divorce proceedings are filed in the chancery clerk's office in the county in which the divorce takes place.

School records contain genealogical information. Most include the parents' name, the age of the student, place of birth and place of residence. In the 1700s families intermarried through students being sent off to school. This was quite common in Maryland and Virginia with students at William & Mary College. Various state censuses have been taken of educable children. This generally was done in an attempt to determine tax distribution.

The Compiled Military Service Records are maintained in the National Archives in Washington; however, copies of the Index to Revolutionary War Records and the War of 1812 Service Records are on file at MDAH. In general, no Mississippian could have served in the American Revolution because Mississippi was not a territory of the United States until 1798. We did have veterans of the War of 1812 and the American Revolution moving to Mississippi after the war, and dying here, leaving heirs. Pension records

would verify the person in question. Some 80,000 Mississippians served in the Civil War. Their service records and pension applications are available through MDAH, also. Those who served in the Spanish-American War are listed in the Annual Report of the Adjutant General of Mississippi, 1898-99. A roster is on file at MDAH of men who served in World War I from Mississippi. This includes their name, county in which they enlisted and serial number. Little information is on file in Mississippi from World War II, and you should refer your requests to the Veterans Administration for both world wars, Korea and Viet Nam. There were also Union soldiers from Mississippi, and their records are at the National Archives. Pensions were allowed for Confederate service by Mississippi around 1900; the United States government did not allow Confederate pensions until 1959.

(Continued in next issue.)

Notes, cont.

Sometimes in all of this movement, official records are inadvertently destroyed or packed up for shipment out; or the new office staff, not understanding the over records, discards them as outdated souvenirs of the predecessor. Charlotte Capers, long-time advocate of better public records management for Mississippi, discusses this situation on page 12.

Reflections on archival education and training are shared with us by Gloria Atkinson, MUW archivist (page 13). I asked her first to write about computers and archivists, a subject she feels she knows about, but she found that her blood pressure rose each time she tried to finish her article, so she chose something not controversial like archival certification. We do hope that Gloria can cool off enough to finish her notes on computers, for she does have some interesting observations.

And finally, in line with the editor's statement, a bibliography on disaster preparedness is contained herein, a handy page format for easy filing. -- hth

FOLKLORE RESEARCH IN YAZOO CITY

By Barbara Allen, Scholar-in-Residence
Yazoo City, Mississippi

In October, I went home to Los Angeles from Yazoo City to attend the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society. When people there asked me what I was doing this year, I told them I was Scholar-in-residence in Yazoo City, Mississippi. The reactions varied from blank stares to subdued "oh's" to "what does that mean?" Well might they ask! I had only been Scholar-in-residence for seven weeks and barely knew what it meant myself. I answered by explaining what my basic charge was and what kinds of projects I had undertaken to fulfill that charge.

The Scholar-in-residence program is a pilot project of the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities, designed to bring a humanities scholar into a community to function as an observer of and participant in community life, to serve as an academic resource in the community, and to raise residents' awareness of and appreciation for the humanities, especially as they bear on matters of public policy. The Yazoo Library Association offered to sponsor the Scholar-in-residence program in Yazoo City. The Library Association's Board of Control decided that an outsider, who could be expected to look at the community from a fresh and objective point of view, should be chosen to fill the position. That explains how this native Californian, who was born and raised in the urban environment of Los Angeles and had never lived outside of California, came to reside in a small Mississippi town for nine months.

The projects which I have instituted to carry out my responsibilities as Scholar-in-residence reflect to a large extent my graduate training in folklore and my fieldwork experience in oral history. There are four such projects. The first is a series of oral history interviews with people from all over Yazoo County. Interview topics depend largely on individual interviewees' knowledge and interests; the broad theme that unites them is life style

and quality of life in Yazoo County. So far, interviews have dealt with pioneer experiences, the Civil War, childhood experiences, hunting, moon-shining, and storytelling. The tapes and transcripts from the interviews will be housed in the Yazoo library, along with other oral history materials which were gathered several years ago in connection with the preparation of a book, Yazoo: Its Legends and Legacies, written by two Yazoo City high school teachers, Harriet DeCell and JoAnne Prichard.

My second major undertaking is a survey of traditional arts in the county, including weaving, basket-making, caning, carving, quilting and other traditional crafts. The survey includes tape-recorded interviews with the artists talking about their work, as well as photographic documentation of the processes involved and, of course, the final products. The ultimate purpose of this project is to mount a photographic and artifactual exhibit in the newly developed Yazoo Historical Museum in the spring.

The third area of endeavor I am engaged in as Scholar-in-residence is a series of monthly articles for local newspapers and the regional edition of the Jackson Clarion-Ledger. The articles take an analytical look at various aspects of Yazoo life and culture, including (and here my academic background again rears its head) holiday customs, Yazooans' sense of family and community, traditional arts, and traditional music. The first article of the series drew upon already existing oral history materials to point out the differences between oral and written history. The November piece was a description and discussion of storytelling in Yazoo County.

The final major project I have undertaken is a series of public programs in the library. The series features guest speakers addressing such topics as Yazoo City's historic Main Street, folk architecture in Yazoo County,

(continued on p. 15)

PAPERS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

By Charlotte Capers, FSAA
Director, Information & Education
Miss. Department of Archives & History

My views on the disposition of the papers of public officials in Mississippi are simply stated. I think that the papers of public officials, or archives, should be deposited in the Department of Archives and History, which is the state agency created by the legislature of 1902 for that specific purpose. The act of establishment includes the following phrase: "...and the objects and purposes of said department are the care and custody of official archives, the collection of materials bearing upon the history of the state and of the territory included therein, from the earliest times,..." etc. and etc.

While public officials do create private papers, which the Mississippi Department of Archives and History classifies as private manuscripts, the opinions expressed in this paper relate to the collection and administration of the official non-current papers of public officials, or archives. Private manuscripts are very important to the study of the life of an individual, as they flesh out the official record, and thrice blessed is the depository that has both official papers and private manuscripts. However, this paper is principally concerned with the care and custody of archives.

Because of my own provenance, an archival term with which we shall deal subsequently, it should be clear that my views are prejudiced. Provenance means office of origin, and I seem to have originated in the Department of Archives and History. As director of the Department from 1955 to 1969, and before that as handmaiden to Dr. William D. McCain, a former president of the Society of American Archivists and second director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, I am a convert to the archival point of view, which takes it for granted that public records or archives should find a safe harbor in an archival depository.

The archivist, as I understand it, attempts to collect archives which will

be useful to the historian and other qualified, or unqualified, researchers. The archivist has no ax to grind, it is assumed; he or she is concerned with the papers of public officials because they document the organization and function of public agencies. The archivist is simply trying to see that valuable research material is administered in such a way that it will be preserved, that scholars can locate it, that they can have access to it, and that they can use it. The archivist is also aware of his responsibility to protect the legal rights of the individual in the administration of certain sensitive material. These objectives of archival administration seem to be best fulfilled in an archival agency; the Mississippi Department of Archives and History meets these criteria.

It has been my observation that most of the scholars who come to Mississippi from afar come first to the Department of Archives and History, seeking the material in which they are interested in the place they believe most likely to contain it. Therefore, the location of papers in a central depository in a capital city seems to be logical and convenient. If we have what scholars and researchers seek in a centrally located depository, the scholars and researchers save time and money. If we do not have what they seek, we should have a guide to the archives in the state, so that we can direct them to the proper place for their studies. At any rate, I think it is logical and convenient for scholars to do research in the Department of Archives and History.

Access is a problem that plagues many librarians and archivists. The restrictions, if any, on access should be carefully considered before a contract of gift or acquisition is signed by donor and agency. An archivist must consider that the creator of papers should have access to the papers for his research and reference use. Agencies may need to be assured of continuation

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MEDITATIONS ON PROFESSIONALISM

By Gloria L. Atkinson

Mississippi University for Women

One of the most important questions faced by the Society of American Archivists today, for those of us in the profession and for those considering it as a potential career as well, is the question of professionalism. This indeed covers a multitude of problems - the problem of training and education, the problem of moral obligations and ethics, problems of standards and loyalties. Each working archivist in every field, be it business, university, government, medical or church-related, has at one time or another faced a critical personal decision concerning the handling of certain papers. Should papers be destroyed if they can bring harm to living persons or should they be "buried"? Do we share impartially with scholars and other researchers materials reflecting the bad as well as the good concerning our own institutions? Where do our loyalties lie? What source can we cite and what source can we depend on for solutions to the myriad questions which confront archivists daily? Many new archivists, without adequate education and training in the profession, have no answers. It is my opinion, as a twenty-year veteran of archives administration at all levels, including a period as Chief of the Air Force Archives with its millions of documents and variety of content, that as a profession our answer lies in a standardized, nationally recognized combination of training and education. Competency in our field cannot be obtained simply from booklets and the few older standard works on archives management and administration. There must be "field training" made available along with college courses, giving the student the opportunity to obtain that special "feel" most of us have for our own specialized work. Difficult to describe, and almost mystical in quality, it is a combination of reverence, excitement, duty, enthusiasm, obligation, patience, knowledge, experience and hard work.

Designing such a program for future archivists has not and will not be easy. Once designed, having such a program accepted by all participating universities will not be easy. While formidable, the task is possible and necessary. Should the SAA on a national level give us standards for certification, or a state-wide body begin working to foster such an action, then there is no doubt our profession as a whole would derive great benefits. Librarians are traditionally required to have an M.L.S.; however, as most archivists and some librarians are aware, the professions, though related, are distinctly different. A standard certification for archivists could perform in exactly the same manner as the M.L.S. With a liberal arts background, grounded solidly in history, the archival courses should cover one undergraduate year and one postgraduate year. If a student desired to complete only the undergraduate courses, a Certificate in Archives Administration could be awarded under a Bachelor of Arts curriculum. If the student completes the two years, a Diploma in Archival Administration could be awarded under the Master of Arts curriculum. In this stretch of time, the student could acquire a basic archival vocabulary, basic reference and research tools, refinement of finding aids, subject bibliographies and inventories and preservation concepts, as well as practical field training in an approved archival institution. In addition, time would permit and foster what I believe to be basic assumptions for the training of all professional archivists.

Assumption 1: A program designed for the professional education of archivists should aim to instill a deep conviction that the primary and inescapable responsibility of the archivist is towards his archives. How to preserve, protect and care for those objects which lie upon his shelves and in his cabinets is his primary mission.

Assumption 2: A program designed for the professional education of archivists

Professionalism, cont.

should be based upon a thorough knowledge and understanding of the theoretical and historical principles, concepts and responsibilities underlying the practice of the profession. Understanding the concepts and principles underlying archival problems is of course a prerequisite to discovering solutions to those problems.

Assumption 3: A program designed for the professional education of archivists should aim to foster a sufficient depth and breadth of knowledge of archival methods and techniques to enable the archivist to apply the skills and techniques acquired in any archival environment. The post-graduate program can provide a free interchange of ideas and views on methodology, and the development of the initiative and resourcefulness necessary in resolving problems only encountered during the performance of archival work. This will furnish the student with a much broader background than he might gain exclusively in the classroom.

Assumption 4: A program designed for the professional education of archivists should be based on the assumption that the archivist - perhaps in consultation but ultimately the archivist alone - is best qualified by training and experience to judge those records best suited for the future. Evaluation of records for disposition is considered by many archivists to be the element presenting the greatest difficulty, and calling for the highest of professional judgement. The archivist is not just a custodian or receiver of whatever papers someone may choose to give him, but a voice in deciding what records are to be retained, and what sources will be available to historians in the future.

Assumption 5: A program designed for the professional education of archivists should take into account not only the enormous increase in the quantity, but also the variety of records to be processed by the archivist, necessitating a diversification or specialization within the field. Because of modern technology, we must recognize that no one person has the ability to be expert in all fields. An archivist in charge

of a large manuscript collection cannot be expected to have an in-depth knowledge comparable to that of a competent record manager. Although having an appreciation of the various fields, the archivist be forced to have his own area of expertise.

Assumption 6: A program designed for the professional education of archivists should endeavor to foster the broadest possible view of the archivist's role reflecting the fact that the archivist is not just a custodian of records, but that his role should include the projection of his archives to create its own "public image," creating for the public an awareness of its existence and importance. The public role of the archivist calls for an active part in talking to groups, arranging exhibits, assisting researchers of other institutions, writing to the press and making appearances at every possible occasion - not just as public relations but as a means of accomplishing a major task - that of arousing an informed interest in documents beyond the limits of an academic circle; to make local, county and national archives something everyone knows about and accepts as a matter of course. These myriad activities will build up and maintain an informed public, which will nourish the study of history and assist in maintaining standards.

Assumption 7: A program designed for the professional education of archivists should endeavor to foster a deep conviction of the important nature of the work they perform. Archivists should be as well trained at their business as historians are at theirs. A truly competent archivist should be looked upon as a scholarly colleague of the researcher. Many historians do view us in this fashion; however, some still cling to the idea of archivist as caretaker only. If we wish to be looked upon as joint colleagues in a scholarly venture, then we must not only be thoroughly trained and educated, but convinced of the importance of our mission and goals. A renowned British archivist-author, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, once proclaimed that the good archivist is perhaps the

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Public Officials, cont.

of some of their records, within archivally accepted guidelines. If a collection has too many restrictions, which prevents its use by scholars to a limiting degree, it possibly should not be accepted. The difference between a safe deposit or storage facility and an archival agency is that the archival agency staff is always aware that the collection is there to be used; if not, there is no point in giving it house room.

This brings us to the archival principle of provenance, or the office origin of an archival unit. Provenance also suggests a kinship of collections. It would seem to violate the principle of provenance if the papers of an agency head were donated to his alma mater, and the agency's working files to the state archives. Collections which were created by an agency of government should be kept together to preserve their integrity and to support scholarly research, which seeks the whole story.

The above seems a little off the track, but the editor asked for comments on provenance. He also asked for comments on legal points to be considered in the administration of archives.

First, there is the act of establishment of 1902, already quoted in part. There is no records management law in Mississippi, but the intent of the legislature was made clear in a Senate resolution passed in 1962, which requests "all former governors, United States senators and congressmen of the State of Mississippi, or their families, to make available to the archives and history department of the State of Mississippi, state papers or documents or papers which would be of public interest to the state of Mississippi, after their terms of office have expired, at such time and on such terms as they may designate." This resolution is a feeble step in the right direction, but lacks the force of law. There are other laws which provide that state agency heads should consult the archives department

before destroying their files, but these laws have been ineffective and are largely ignored.

Mississippi needs a records management law, similar to the laws now in effect in a majority of the states of the Union. Such a law would establish a records management procedure, which would winnow the chaff from the wheat and assure the acquisition, preservation and administration of the papers of public officials; and would be helpful to the public officials who created the records, as well as to scholars who will base important studies on them.

A pilot records survey, conducted by the Department of Archives and History and supported by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, is now under way. It is hoped that its results will convince the legislature of the importance of a records management law for Mississippi. Under the provisions of a good records management law, records of permanent legal and historical value would find their way to the Department of Archives and History; records of less importance would be placed on retention and disposal schedules; the needs of state government agencies and the needs of scholars would be served; and a great saving in expenditures for rent, storage space, filing equipment and manpower would be effected.

Folklore, cont.

traditional blues by Yazoo musicians, African elements in black American culture, and the sense of place which characterizes Yazooans' identification with their community. I conducted the first program of the series myself, presenting the pro's and con's of telling fairy tales to children.

Other activities in which I find myself involved include speaking to various groups and organizations in the community. For example, I have consulted with one group of teachers about using folklore in the classroom and with

Folklore, cont.

another group on how oral history can enrich our understanding of our past.

The overall thrust of all these activities is to focus on the questions: "What is unique about Yazoo?" "What are the elements that constitute Yazooans' sense of community identity?" In the interviews I conduct, I ask people to tell me, an outsider, what it means to be a Yazooan; in my newspaper articles, I attempt to use what people tell me to interpret the community to itself through its residents' own words.

Community identity is an intangible but it can be embodied or symbolized in concrete, tangible things -- in local landmarks like historic buildings, for instance. In Yazoo City, one such landmark is the old Main Street public school which now houses the Yazoo Triangle Cultural Center (so called from the shape of the block on which it is situated). The Triangle Cultural Center is home for the Yazoo Historical Museum, the Yazoo Arts Council, and Playhouse 75, the little theater group. The public library, next door to the Triangle Cultural Center, is another landmark in Yazoo City, because of its age (built in 1902) and distinctive architectural style. It seems to me to be particularly appropriate that the Scholar-in-residence program is so intimately associated with this institution; the library is the local sponsoring agency; my office is there; the programs are held there; the materials generated by the Scholar-in-residence program, such as tapes, transcripts and photographs, will be permanently stored there.

I hope that, through my efforts as Scholar-in-residence, a physical symbol of Yazoo identity -- the library -- will become for residents a recognized repository of the intangibles of community identity, captured on tape and in photographs. The materials will be there, of course, to be used by residents. Bibliographies developed for distribution at various Scholar-in-residence programs can guide people interested in pursuing the topics raised in those programs; the information

gathered in the traditional arts survey can be incorporated into a community resources file; the oral history and folklore interview tapes and transcripts can be used in conjunction with other materials already on deposit, including WPA files, for local historical research.

In terms of effectiveness, the Scholar-in-residence has two aspects. On the one hand, the immediate impact of the Scholar-in-residence on the community during the nine-month residence derives from interviews and personal contacts with other individuals and through the newspaper articles and library program series. Long-term impact of the Scholar-in-residence program, on the other hand, will come from the enthusiasm generated among local residents to continue to explore the bases of community identity through the materials already available in the library and the collection of additional materials. The opportunity to spark that interest and enthusiasm is what makes my job in Yazoo City challenging and rewarding.

Professionalism, cont.

most selfless devotee of Truth the modern world produces.

And finally, Roger Ellis, noted British archivist, reminds us that one of the sole aims of an archivist's work is to preserve and present the facts in his keeping. Without the imagination and art of the historians, those facts can remain, as we all know, a valley of dry bones; but without the archivist's science and research, the historian will not know either what the facts are or where they are to be found.

If, as someone noted in 1965, one of the criteria for the recognition of a profession is the existence of a generally recognized system controlled by the profession for certifying the possession of a body of knowledge, then we as archivists should be about our business.

DISASTER PREVENTION AND CONTROL: A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

By Richard Strassberg
Cornell University
Rev., Sept., 1979

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